



One Hundred Fourteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

I am writing to express my concern over recent press reports<sup>1</sup> suggesting that the Administration has suppressed an important tax-payer funded border security report that details the probability of an individual successfully crossing the border illegally, including estimates of those who are not detected by the U.S. Border Patrol.

Using “known-flow” data, the U.S. Border Patrol calculates its Interdiction Effectiveness Rate (IER) across the entire southwest border at 80%. Unfortunately, this data is, at best, an incomplete picture of the situation along the border because it is based on what is detected by cameras, sensors and agents on the ground. The IER fails to take into account the illicit flow that goes undetected, which we know is substantial. At a hearing I held on March 1, 2016, U.S. Border Patrol Acting Chief Ronald Vitiello stated that only, “about 56% of the border is deployed in a way that agents and/or technology can see activity in real time.”

Moreover, the IER includes individuals not seeking to evade apprehension. This means that an individual who turns themselves in to a law enforcement agent shortly after crossing the border – such as an unaccompanied child or asylum seeker – is counted the same as a drug trafficker who avoids detection and arrest. Such reporting only further inflates the reported effectiveness percentage. Today, independent studies using Mexican survey data suggest that Border Patrol effectiveness is actually closer to 50%.<sup>2</sup> – a far cry from the 80% publicly reported.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection and DHS Chief Financial Officer contracted with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to produce several estimates of illicit flow into the country. It is my understanding that the final report was released to DHS Leadership in May of this year. In order to rebuild trust in our system, we need transparency with the American people and full

---

<sup>1</sup> Malia Zimmerman and William Lajeunesse, “DHS accused of sitting on damning border report as immigration issue drives presidential race,” *Fox News*, September 15, 2016. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2016/09/15/dhs-accused-sitting-on-damning-border-report-as-immigration-issue-drives-presidential-race.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Carla N. Argueta, “Border Security Metrics Between Ports of Entry.” *Congressional Research Service*. February 16, 2016.

and accurate measurements of our effectiveness along the border. Thank you for your attention to this very important border security matter.

Pursuant to House Rule XI, clause 2(m) I request that you submit the final IDA report to the Committee not later than September 30, 2016. Should you have any questions about this letter, please contact Paul Anstine at 202-226-8417.

Sincerely,



MARTHA MCSALLY

Chairman

Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security